



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

March 25, 2005

# News Release

## **TWO CHARGED CRIMINALLY FOR ALIEN SMUGGLING**

MINNEAPOLIS—Two men who were among 18 illegal aliens arrested Tuesday by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents were criminally charged in federal court yesterday for alien smuggling.

Cesar Godinez-Perez, 20, and Efrain Arias-Perez, 24, both of Mexico, were criminally charged in U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota on one count each of transporting aliens they knew to be in the U.S. illegally.

“Alien smuggling is a criminal enterprise that we won’t tolerate,” said Special Agent-in-Charge Mark Cangemi of the ICE office in Bloomington, Minn. “Smugglers have repeatedly shown that they view people as little more than cargo to be turned into a profit. We will aggressively pursue those suspected of engaging in this criminal activity.”

An Iowa State Patrol officer contacted ICE Tuesday morning after stopping a pickup truck in northern Iowa for a traffic violation and discovering what he believed to be an alien smuggling vehicle, according to a criminal complaint filed in district court. The trooper allowed the vehicle to continue, and special agents from the Bloomington, Minn., ICE office traveled to southern Minnesota, where they sighted the pickup near the Iowa-Minnesota border and began to tail it.

ICE special agents watched as the vehicle dropped one man off in Worthington, Minn., then continued eastward on Interstate 90 to just past Austin, Minn. ICE agents there, assisted by Mower County Sheriff’s Office deputies and Minnesota State Patrol officers, stopped the vehicle, which had Arizona license plates.

Inside were 17 people—4 females and 13 males—who were arrested by ICE for being in the United States illegally. Special agents also arrested the man who had been dropped off in Worthington. Sixteen of those arrested are from Mexico; two are from Guatemala.

To date, ICE detention and removal officers have returned 12 of those arrested to Mexico; four are still in ICE custody; and the two men criminally charged yesterday are in U.S. Marshals custody.

In recent years, human smuggling gangs have descended on the Southwest border, building a lucrative industry by charging people substantial fees to be brought into the United States illegally. To address this growing threat, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement launched Operation ICE Storm in the Phoenix, Ariz., and the surrounding area. ICE Storm is an unprecedented multi-agency initiative to dismantle organized criminal outfits that have made human smuggling a profitable but bloody business venture.

Since its beginning in October 2003, ICE Storm has led to prosecuting 308 defendants on a wide range of violations, including: human smuggling, money laundering, kidnapping, hostage-taking, narcotics smuggling and possession, and illegal weapons possession. More than \$7.2 million in criminal currency has been seized from smuggling organizations, along with 160 weapons, including: handguns, AK-47s, and SKS military assault rifles. Furthermore, 6,061 illegal aliens have been apprehended in the Phoenix area.

In addition, ICE Storm has been credited with a significant drop in crime in the Phoenix area, with area police pointing to significant declines in the city's murder rate, sexual assaults, aggravated assaults, robberies, weapons seizures, and smuggling-related violence.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*